Pregnancy Act (Amendment) Bill, 2002 in the present session of the Parliament. The amendment seeks to (a) delegate powers to a committee headed by the Chief Medical Officers/District Health Officer at district level in order to avoid delay for approval of private clinics, (b) Prescribe punishment of regorous imprisonment of not less than two years which may extend to seven years for clinics which arc not approved for conducting MTPs and also for persons who do not possess the qualifications, training and experience for conducting Medical Termination of Pregnancy as prescribed under the MTP Rules and (c) substitute the expression lunatic with mentally ill person to bring if in tune with the Mental Health Act, 1987.

The amendments are intended to make safe abortion services easily accessible to the public and to discourage illegal abortions.

Leprosy cases in Bihar

2983. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that according to a joint survey conducted by Bihar Government and WHO, Bihar has the largest number of leprosy cases in India (16.25 per 10,000);

(b) if so, the reasons therefor and how it compares with other States like U.P., Orissa, M.P., etc.;

. (c) whether any steps are being taken in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRI A. RAJA): (a) No such survey has been undertaken in Bihar. However, it is a fact that Bihar has highest number of leprosy cases in India. At the end of February, 2002, the number of leprosy cases in the State was 1,05,822 (Prevalence rate 12.77 per 10,000 population) amounting to 21.67 percent of the total cases under treatment in the country.

(b) Under the World Bank assisted National Leprosy Eradication

Programme (NLEP), Multi Drug Therapy services were extended to all the districts of the country in a phased manner. Some of the districts of Bihar were brought under MDT only by 1995-96.

The State of Bihar has a problem of acute understaffing, both in Vertical Leprosy Structure and General Health Care Services.

There are a number of vacancies in both regular and contract staff. The current prevalence rates for States of U.P., M.P., Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand are given below:—

States	Prevalence Rate/10,000 population
Madhya Pradesh	2.58
Uttar Pradesh	6.19
Chhattisgarh	11.55
Jharkhand	15.05
Orissa	9.26

(c) and (d) To overcome manpower shortage, the State has been sanctioned 23 posts of Assistant District Leprosy Officers to be filled on contract basis. Expenditure on these posts will be met from NLEP funds given to districts by the Government of India.

The focus during the 2nd Phase of NLEP is one of the 5+2 endemic States which includes Bihar. In order to provide further technical support, some international NGOs working in the field of leprosy are providing Technical Support Teams, one in each district of Bihar. WHO has provided a State Coordinator in each endemic State including Bihar. In addition to this, WHO has also provided 3 zonal coordinators in Bihar.

Steps to check reappearance of plague

2984. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that reappearance of plague in parts of Himachal Pradesh reflected a retrograde journey in the health-care sector, although the timely intervention of his Ministry was able to contain it; and